



College of Dentistry
and Dental Clinics



Iowa

Dental Hygienists' Association

December 14, 2020

Dear Deputy Director Reisetter:

The Iowa Dental Association, the University of Iowa College of Dentistry and Dental Clinics, and the Iowa Dental Hygienists' Association appreciate the difficult task before the Infectious Disease Advisory Council (IDAC) as it contemplates the COVID-19 vaccine distribution plan. We respect the Council's charge to ensure the health and safety of all Iowans during a time when the vaccine supply is limited. As vaccines receive emergency use authorization and Iowa receives additional information on distribution quantities from federal partners, we respectfully request you consider the unique position of oral healthcare providers within the prioritization plan. We want to emphasize, however, our full understanding that providers who are in constant contact with those who are known to be infected with the virus, long term care facility residents and staff, and other first responders, should receive the highest sub-priority of Phase 1 in your considerations.

Oral health is an integral component of systemic health, and dentistry is an essential healthcare service because of its role in evaluating, diagnosing, preventing, and treating oral diseases. Dentists and their staff provide a wide variety of services, ranging from preventive cleanings to fillings, root canals, crowns, and extractions. Many of these dental services are time-sensitive and can lead to serious health issues if not managed appropriately. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, dentists and their staff have worked diligently to ensure that oral healthcare is delivered in a safe and effective manner that mitigates the spread of COVID-19. In addition, treating patients with oral health needs in the dental office keeps them out of the overburdened hospital emergency departments.

Because of the reasons outlined above, we were pleased to be included in Phase 1-A of the state's distribution plan, which focuses on critical populations, including healthcare personnel, who are at an increased risk of contracting COVID-19. On a daily basis oral healthcare providers work within close physical proximity to patients who may have the virus and are unable to wear a facecovering during treatment. Many, if not most, of the treatment provided involves aerosol-generating procedures, thus creating an environment where there is increased potential for exposure to disease and infection compared to other healthcare providers.

Due to these risk factors, and because dentistry is an essential component of overall healthcare, it is important that dentists and their staff are prioritized as part of the essential healthcare personnel workforce. Government agencies such as the Department of Homeland Security and Federal Emergency Management Agency have already acknowledged dentistry as an essential service needed to maintain the health of Americans, and we now ask that the IDAC also acknowledge dentistry as a critical component of the vaccine distribution plan.

The Iowa Dental Association, the University of Iowa College of Dentistry and Dental Clinics, and the Iowa Dental Hygienists' Association respectfully request the committee's support in ensuring dentists and their staff are prioritized within the Phase 1-A subset group.

Respectfully,

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